

LOCAL FILMS LINE UP for Eid-ul-Azha release

This Eid-ul-Azha, local theatres gear up for a rare showdown as eight distinct Bangladeshi films, spanning thrillers, dramas, and comebacks, each staking its claim at the box office.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As the Eid-ul-Azha holidays approach, Bangladesh's film industry is preparing for a rare moment of cinematic abundance. For the first time in years, moviegoers will have an unusually rich selection of local films—from action thrillers and romantic dramas to mystery and satire—all vying for attention at the box office.

The stage is set for an Eid showdown not just between stars, but between genres, ambitions, and visions of what Bangladeshi cinema can be.

At the centre of the buzz is *Taandob*, a political thriller directed by Raihan Rafi. Superstar Shakib Khan leads the cast alongside Jaya Ahsan and Sabila Nur in a story about an orchestrated attack on a television station.

High-octane and unapologetically dramatic, the film blends suspense with the urgency of newsroom chaos. Rafi has hinted



to play," Badhan told The Daily Star. The film marks her first role as a law enforcement officer and could signal a new era of strong, nuanced female leads in Bangladeshi thrillers.

Mosharraf Karim, one of Bangladesh's most versatile actors, returns to the big screen with *Insaaf*, an action drama that explores the blurry line between justice and retribution.

Co starring Sariful Razz and Tasnia Farin, *Insaaf* comes with all the trappings of a commercial potboiler, but early buzz suggests it also carries political undertones. Directed by Sanjjoy Somadder, the film seems poised to appeal to both mainstream and more discerning audiences.

Adding to the Eid mix is *Neel Chokro*, a family-friendly thriller from director Mithu Khan. The film marks Arifin Shuvoo's much-anticipated return after a quiet spell. Paired with rising talent Monderia Chakraborty, Shuvoo's role promises suspense layered with emotional complexity. While the plot has been kept under wraps, promotional material hints at a narrative grounded in memory, loss, and moral choices.

Meanwhile, veteran actor Zahid Hasan steps back into cinema with *Uthob*, directed by Tanim Noor. Known for his stage and television work, the actor hasn't headlined a major film in years, and his return has stirred nostalgia among fans.

And then there's *Pinik*, a revenge drama led by Shobhona Bubly, also featuring Ador Azad.

The trailer hints at a personal vendetta playing out against a dark urban backdrop—gritty, loud, and emotionally charged. Director Zahid Jewel has described it as "a woman's journey through rage and resilience."

Interestingly, *Uthob* is also the title of another Eid release—this one starring Sunerah Binte Kamal. Known for her Bangladesh National Film Award-winning performance in *No Dorai*, Sunerah's return is eagerly awaited.

Tanim Noor's film—separate from Hasan's version—focuses on family dynamics and identity, though plot specifics are still under wraps. Whether the title overlaps is a coincidence or clever marketing remains to be seen, but it certainly adds a layer of intrigue.

With eight diverse films lined up, this Eid is shaping up to be a rare moment of experimentation and ambition in Bangladeshi cinema. Whether audiences are drawn by big names, daring stories, or fresh faces, the box office will serve as the ultimate jury.

For audiences looking for something softer, *Tagar*, starring Puja Chery and Ador Azad, offers a romantic drama tinged with melodrama. Directed by Aalok Hasan, the film leans into traditional love-story tropes, but its sleek visuals and youthful cast might attract a younger crowd.

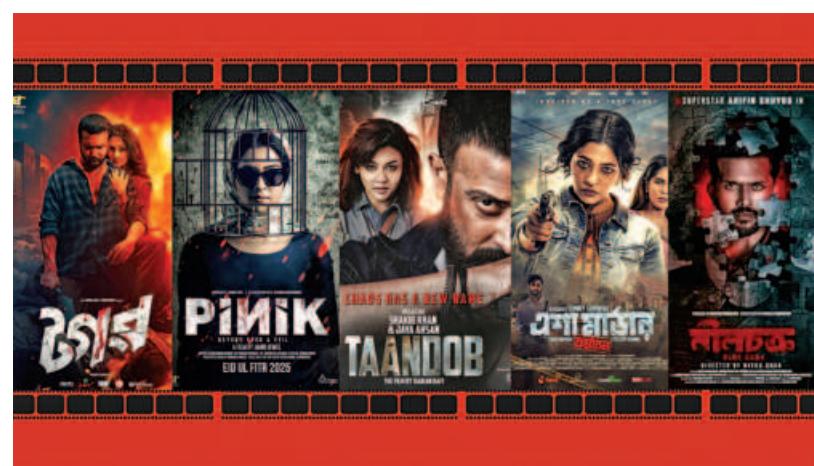
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that *Taandob* is his most intense film yet—a claim that's raised expectations significantly, especially given Shakib Khan's star power and Jaya's reputation for choosing socially conscious scripts.

On the opposite end of the genre spectrum is *Esha Murder*, a crime drama with a feminist twist. Helmed by Sunny Sanwar, the film casts Azmeri Haque Badhan—fresh off international acclaim—as a no-nonsense police officer investigating a murder that's anything but straightforward.

"It's the kind of character I've been waiting

to play," Badhan told The Daily Star. The film marks her first role as a law enforcement officer and could signal a new era of strong, nuanced female leads in Bangladeshi thrillers.

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NEWS

HC rejects writ

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"How can the recommendations of the commission be challenged by a writ petition? The recommendations should be left to the government."

Aneek also argued that the petitioner lacked locus standi (the legal standing to bring such a petition), as he is not directly aggrieved by the recommendations. "Therefore, the writ was not maintainable and should be summarily rejected."

Fawzia Karim Firoze, a senior Supreme Court lawyer, also opposed the petition, supporting Aneek's arguments.

In a press release, Shirin Huq, chair of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, said, "All members of the commission are committed to ensuring women's rights and welcome rational and constructive discussions and criticism with all stakeholders. We are satisfied with the court's decision [to reject the writ petition] and call on all relevant stakeholders to work together towards a just and equal society so that our recommendations can be meaningfully discussed."

Lawyers representing the commission also expressed satisfaction with the court's decision. "We, as lawyers instructed by the Chair of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, are pleased to note that a divisional bench of the High Court, comprising Justice Fatema Najib and Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi, has summarily rejected Writ Petition No-7426 of 2025, on the grounds of it being premature. The writ had sought to challenge the constitutionality of certain recommendations of the commission, even though those had neither been adopted nor implemented by the interim government."

The statement, signed by Supreme Court lawyers Sara Hossain, Rasheda Imam, Qazi Zahed Iqbal, Manzur Al-Matin, Abeda Gulrukha and Priya Ahsan Chowdhury, concluded, "We hope there will be no further efforts to waste the court's valuable time on this matter, and that all concerned stakeholders engage in reasoned and constructive debate on the commission's recommendations to ensure rights and justice for women."

22% of revenue to go towards interest

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once provided loans at less than 1 percent interest rate. Now, loans from Japan come at nearly 2 percent interest rate.

Besides, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are now providing a portion of their loans at market-based interest rates.

As the taka depreciated against the US dollar in the past three years, the interest burden against foreign loans soared in terms of taka.

The average exchange rate rose more than Tk 120 per dollar this fiscal year, up from Tk 111 last fiscal year.

The Bangladesh Bank's recent policy rate increases have contributed to rising interest payments on domestic loans.

The interest rate for the government's domestic borrowing from banks and non-bank sources

through treasury bonds and bills also increased between 10 and 12 percent, which was 8 percent until 2023.

The country's interest payments soared as the government borrowed heavily, particularly for mega projects, often without proper research, said Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director at the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development.

This borrowing was justified by the relatively safe debt-to-GDP ratio at the time, which led to a significant increase in debt, he said.

"Borrowing was often driven by political decisions without proper feasibility studies being conducted, leading to widespread corruption. Consequently, the loans were not utilised effectively or efficiently."

As a result, these projects are not generating sufficient returns to repay the loans, which ultimately becomes

a burden on the budget.

Some of the loans taken in recent years have short repayment periods, further exacerbating the financial strain and due to high interest payments, the government's fiscal space has been severely constrained, he added.

"Our objective is to avoid falling into a debt trap, where a significant portion of the budget is consumed by loan repayments—be it operating costs or interest payments," said Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud last week.

A key objective of the interim government is to reduce the country's debt risk from "moderate" to "lower", Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star last week.

"It's not that we won't borrow from foreign and local sources, but we will bring the amount down," he added.

Hamas agrees

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"inhumane" and "senseless" war, while aid groups said the trickle of aid is not nearly enough to staunch the hunger and health crises.

In Gaza City, civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that an early-morning Israeli strike on the Fahmi Al-Jarjawi school, where displaced people were sheltering, killed "at least 33, with dozens of injured, mostly children, including several women".

Another strike killed at least 19 people "after the warplanes targeted the Abd Rabbo family's home early this morning in the town of Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip", Bassal said.

Israel has expanded its Gaza offensive, activating tens of thousands of reservists as it aims for the defeat of Hamas, reports AFP.

It issued an evacuation warning for parts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis yesterday, following what it said were rocket launches from the area as the country prepared to celebrate Jerusalem Day.

The Israeli military said yesterday that over "the past 48 hours, the (air force) struck over 200 targets throughout the Gaza Strip, including terrorists, weapon storage facilities, sniper and anti-tank missile posts, tunnel shafts, and additional terrorist infrastructure sites".

BNP welcomes army

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At a high-level gathering at Dhaka Cantonment on May 21, Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz Zaman said the national election should be held by December this year.

"The army chief's statement has reassured the nation. He has said the military will play no role in governing the country. The nation has received this message well."

The BNP leader further said that everyone wants elections, and so if a roadmap is provided, the country will enter a democratic transition.

Saying that the interim government should be able to depart with dignity, he opined that after a government departs, it is never desirable that it be on the receiving end of all the blame.

"Governments will come, and they

Men flee village

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from the ruins, while elderly women wept over the destruction and loss.

Not a single man was in sight. The women said their male relatives fled after the attack, and some only return briefly during the day to clean up. They sleep elsewhere for safety.

According to Shriti Biswas, whose home was attacked first, the violence began around 6:30pm as a programme, where 700 people were invited, was underway at her home.

She said that due to music being played on loudspeakers, the killing and the chaos that took place only a few hundred feet away went unnoticed by her and the guests.

"Just before dusk, four men barged in and began smashing everything. They beat our guests and overturned our cooking pots. When I asked what they wanted, they kicked me to the ground and asked for my husband. When I said he wasn't home, they attacked my nephew Sagar Biswas instead," said Shriti.

"They burned at least 10 maunds of rice, stole our money and jewellery, and torched beds, TVs, harmoniums, khols, flutes which were among about 30 musical instruments prepared for the event," she added.

"Since that evening, I couldn't contact my husband and son," she added.

"The fire service arrived after 10:30pm, long after everything was destroyed," she said, breaking down in tears.

Another victim, Shituli Biswas, was in her burnt house with two children and

Demi Lovato weds musician Jordan Lutes

Singer and actor Demi Lovato has tied the knot with Canadian musician Jordan "Jutes" Lutes in an intimate ceremony held on Sunday, May 25, in California.

The wedding, covered exclusively by Vogue, began at 4 pm (PT) and featured Lovato in a custom pearl-white Vivienne Westwood gown with a corset bodice and cathedral-style veil. For the reception, she changed into another design—"The Audrey"—an ivory satin column dress adorned with hand-applied pearls.

The celebration was planned by celebrity event organiser Mindy Weiss. The couple, who met in 2022 while working on Lovato's album *Holy Fvck*.

The couple got engaged in December 2023, with Lutes proposing with a pear-shaped diamond ring. The wedding marks a significant chapter in their relationship, which Lovato has described as the "best years" of her life.



'Ityadi' set to air new episode filmed in Jhenaidah



Popular magazine show *Ityadi*, written and hosted by Hanif Sanket, returns with a new episode filmed in Jhenaidah, airing on BTV on Friday, May 30, at 8 pm. Despite inclement weather, thousands gathered to witness the live shoot.

The episode features a folk song by Selim Chowdhury and Tasiba based on the works of poet Pagla Kanai, and another by Monir Khan. It opens with a dance segment introducing Jhenaidah, performed by over a hundred dancers.

A local quiz leads to a short drama on banana and betel leaf, while reports highlight Dattanagar Agricultural Farm and regional history. Comedic sketches address social issues, including *Poster Nirjaton*, *Poshu Pakhi Preeti*, and *Facebooker Sangbad Sheba*, among others. The episode features an ensemble cast and retains the show's signature interactive and informative format.

will go. But there must be amicable relations with all parties."

Meanwhile, Khasru reiterated that the media in Bangladesh would not be able to properly carry out their duty until democracy is restored.

"Whoever is there undemocratically—at some point, they want to keep the media under pressure to maintain their power."

"Our unity should be for democracy and for the restoration of democratic, constitutional, and political rights, which inherently include media freedom."

He emphasised that the media plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability.

"Just as accountability exists in an elected parliament, the media is also another part of this. They also ensure accountability to the people."

her elderly mother-in-law. Her husband also fled on the night of the attack.

"They took one of our motorcycles and burned another